

FRATERNAL ADDRESS

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By Bishop Warren A. Candler



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Dear Brethren of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ: It is with the greatest regret I find myself unable to attend your General Conference and in person bring to your revered body the fraternal greetings of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

I am honored in having been appointed to such a mission, and the meeting with you would give me much joy. In your godly fellowship my soul would have been refreshed.

My inability to be with you is my loss, but it is your gain; for my beloved friend and honored co-messenger, Rev. E. B. Chappell, D.D., will more than supply my lack of service. No man among us is better fitted than he to be the bearer of a fraternal message to you. He enjoys intimate acquaintance with many of the leaders of your Church, whom he holds in admiration and affection; and for your entire connection he entertains the highest esteem and the most brotherly regard. He will speak to you out of deep and sincere love words expressive of the fraternal feeling of all our people toward your dearly beloved Church.

But while I might leave to him with perfect confidence the entire responsibility of fulfilling the high commission to which we were appointed jointly by the authorities of our Church, I cannot forbear some expression upon my own part of the brotherly esteem in which the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, holds the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.

We can never forget that the holy hands of your saintly Otterbein were laid upon the head of our venerated Asbury when he was ordained a bishop at "the Christmas Conference" of 1784, and that your apostolic bishop united with Bishop Coke in that ordination on Asbury's special request. Who could desire a more apostolic succession than that in which Otterbein was a living link?

At this distance from those days it seems strange that the United Brethren and the first Methodists in America did not melt into a common organization. So similar in doctrine and experience and purpose and evangelical methods, it seems to us that they would have inevitably united in one ecclesiastical organization; but doubtless the Holy Spirit guided them into a different course, that wider and higher ends of the kingdom of God might be accomplished through them as separate organizations than could have been achieved otherwise. We are certain that they waited on the Spirit's guidance in all things, and we are equally sure that they lived and labored in separate connections for no lack of brotherly confidence and affection. They entertained no alienating antipathies and indulged no unchristian antagonisms. Of their unclouded fellowship one might have said: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The unbroken friendship of the successors of those saintly souls, which has continued now for more than a century, has been fragrant as the anointing oil upon Aaron's head that ran down upon his beard and went down to the skirts of his garments.

Among the Methodists themselves, as you know, there have been some sharp contests. Ephraim has sometimes vexed Judah, and not infrequently Judah has been equally vexatious, if not more so. But we have had no differences with the United Brethren.

A great principle of common spiritual life has moved your people and ours alike to preserve the unity of the

Spirit in the bond of peace. The two Churches sprang from the same spiritual source—the evangelical revival which blessed our common country in the latter half of the eighteenth century and the earlier days of the nineteenth century, the force of which has never been wholly spent even until the present. Bonds of life are stronger than the ligaments of mere mechanical organization. This is true even in the sphere of the natural, as exemplified by racial ties and national aspirations.

When during the first half of the nineteenth century groups of men arose in both Germany and Italy who asserted the principle of nationality and demanded that these two peoples should be allowed to fulfill their racial consciousness and realize their distinct genius in national organizations corresponding with their own spirits, they seemed as men who dreamed. Matter-of-fact people regarded them as the veriest visionaries. To such dull souls the true and unchangeable political forms were Bourbon and papal States and the numberless principalities and kingdoms of Germany. But the apostles of nationality saw things more truly. Beneath all superficial differences they saw the deeper and stronger forces of the real unity of spirit by which the future of their respective races would be surely determined. All men know now they were right. Before the power of national life in them barriers broke down, dynasties toppled, papal power yielded, ancient hostilities died, and hoary contentions passed away. Then a new Italy and a new Germany sprang into being.

All these far reaching results were brought to pass by vital forces operating in the sphere of the natural and temporal. But how very much stronger is the force of spiritual life energized by the life-giving Spirit and operating under the pierced but powerful hand of the Prince of Life!

It was such a heavenly power of life which led the

United Brethren and the Methodists to form for themselves without constraint from supervising architects of mechanical ecclesiasticisms, doctrinal systems, and governmental polities so wonderfully similar as to suggest a common origin. Indeed, they did have a common Originator; for their builder and maker was the God of our evangelical fathers.

Our spiritual forefathers were born from the skies, and by an unerring spiritual insight they fashioned things according to the pattern shown them in the Mount.

Hence we, their successors, have found it so easy to walk by the same rule and mind the same things, and to love one another without differences and dissimulations.

And the same divine Spirit which brought Otterbein and Asbury into such close and tender fellowship may lead your people and ours into relations more intimate and affectionate than any of which we have dared to dream up to this hour. If such should be the case, neither you nor we, I am sure, will be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

But whatever the future may hold for our beloved Churches your General Conference to which my beloved brother and I have been commissioned to convey fraternal greetings may be accounted *eine grosse Versammlung*, like that in Lancaster County to which Otterbein came unbidden but not unwelcome, and at which, after listening to Martin Boehm's powerful discourse, he arose and embraced the fervent preacher, exclaiming: "We are brethren."

My dear brethren, "We are brethren" indeed, and in this fact we rejoice and will rejoice.

At every remembrance of your work of faith and labor of love our people give thanks to God.

If they all were assembled here before you to-day, they

would with one voice say to you, as Otterbein exclaimed to Boehm: "We are brethren." And if your people were assembled here also I dare believe they would respond in tones of equal brotherly love.

With such an exchange of fraternal greetings by the people of our beloved Churches, brought face to face, what might not happen? I will not undertake to answer the question; but I venture to believe Otterbein and Asbury from their high seats in glory would rejoice at the sight of any closer tie between their spiritual children and bless from the skies the happy bond.

"And now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

May "the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glorified forever and ever. Amen,"